

SECTION

IV

BIENNIAL REPORT FOR SERVICES FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

1963-1965

Central Office

Lincoln, Nebraska

Branch Office

Omaha, Nebraska

Branch Office

Ogallala, Nebraska

SERVICES FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Marion E. Clark, Director

The State Department of Services for the Visually Impaired operates as an agency of the State Department of Public Institutions for the purposes of providing rehabilitation services for persons with visual impairments; and for collecting, interpreting, and disseminating information relating to the causes, prevention, and cure of blindness. The Nebraska Statutes which authorize the program and activities of the agency are Sections 81-101, 83-101.01 to 83-120 inclusive, 83-210 to 83-210.06 inclusive, R.S. 1943, 1965 Cumulative Supplement; and 83-211 to 83-212 inclusive, R.S. 1943.

Interpretation of the Statutes which define the term, blind, to include "all persons whose sight is so defective as seriously to limit their ability to engage in the ordinary vocations and activities of life" makes it the duty of this agency to serve not only those who are blind, as that term is commonly used and understood; but also to serve those with less severe visual defects.

The Statutes also clearly state that services to children with visual defects shall be the responsibility of the State Department of Education from birth until the completion of a suitable program of education. This is interpreted to be the completion of high school or as far toward that goal as the child's abilities will permit, or 21 years of age.

The 1965 Nebraska Legislature also passed legislation which has made possible the development of a children's eye care program as a part of Crippled Children's Services in the State Department of Public Welfare.

While some services, such as the lending of talking book machines, are available to young blind children; for the most part, the services of this agency are to older children and adults. A very close working relationship among the various agencies having responsibilities for services for the visually impaired provides uninterrupted and well coordinated total individual

services to persons of all ages who are known to need such services.

The number of blind persons in Nebraska is about 3,000 whose vision would be less than 20/200 in the better eye with best corrective lens or whose field of vision at its widest diameter is no greater than 20 degrees; plus 10,000 or more who have seriously limiting visual defects. It is estimated that at least 50% of the blind are above the age of 65.

In addition to the State office in Lincoln, district offices of the Nebraska Services for the Visually Impaired are maintained in Ogallala and Omaha. The total staff of the agency consists of the director, a supervisor of rehabilitation, five vocational rehabilitation counselors, three home teachers, a supervisor of small business enterprises, a supervisor of special services, two accounting clerks, three full-time secretaries, and two half-time secretaries. Also available on a consulting basis, are an ophthalmologist as the State medical consultant, three district medical consultants, and a psychologist. Services of other specialists are purchased as needed.

It is planned to add an assistant to the supervisor of small business enterprises during the next biennium to make possible further expansion in vending stands and home industries.

The Department of Services for the Visually Impaired meets its financed responsibilities through a combination of services provided by joint State-Federal vocational rehabilitation services and State-only financed services. Following are reports on each of these approaches to services.

THE STATE-FEDERAL VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

From July 1, 1963 to June 30, 1964, 439 persons were referred to this agency for vocational rehabilitation services; 133 of these were accepted for services; 162 were either not interested or not otherwise eligible

or feasible; 144 were still in the process of investigation to determine eligibility at the end of the fiscal year.

On July 1, 1963, 134 persons were receiving vocational rehabilitation services. Added to this number were the 133 new cases accepted for services during the year, making a total of 267 persons receiving services during the fiscal year. Of this number 73 completed their rehabilitation and were successfully employed; 21 cases were closed during the year because of death or for other reasons; and 173 were still receiving services at the end of the fiscal year.

From July 1, 1964 to June 30, 1965, 418 persons were referred to this agency for vocational rehabilitation services; 105 of these were accepted for services; 187 were either not interested or not otherwise eligible or feasible; 126 were still in the process of investigation to determine eligibility at the end of the fiscal year.

On July 1, 1964, 173 persons were receiving vocational rehabilitation services. Added to this number were the 105 new cases accepted for services during the year, making a total of 278 persons receiving services during the fiscal year. Of this number 82 completed their rehabilitation and were successfully employed; 35 cases were closed during the year because of death or for other reasons; and 161 were still receiving services at the end of the fiscal year.

An Extension and Improvement Project was begun in late September of 1963 in which a Supervisor of Special Services was employed to help in developing resources to prepare blind persons for employment, in interpreting the purposes and processes of vocational rehabilitation to the public, and in developing and promoting employment opportunities for the blind. The Project was to continue to June 30, 1966; and, as of June 30, 1965, much improvement in each of the three areas of development—resources, understanding, and opportunity—was evident.

Cooperative working relationships with the Lions Clubs of Nebraska and the Department of Ophthalmology at the University of Nebraska Hospital continued to make available the resources of the Nebraska Lions Eye Bank and the Low Vision Clinic for sight conservation and restoration.

Security measures at the Nebraska State Penal Complex caused the discontinuation of the recording onto tapes of textbook materials for blind students by inmates. Replacing this volunteer service has been the volunteer recording of these text materials by the Casper E. Yost Chapter of the Telephone Pioneers of America in Omaha and employees of the Western Electric Company in Omaha. The women of the Beth El Synagogue of Omaha continue to make a great contribution to the rehabilitation of blind persons through their Braille transcribing services which is also done on a volunteer basis.

Limited use was made of the special orientation and adjustment centers for the blind in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and in Topeka, Kansas, for persons in need of intensive services for learning to live as blind persons.

The facilities and programs of Goodwill Industries, Inc., of Omaha, were used quite extensively for adjust-

ment, orientation, evaluation, training, and work adjustment. With the addition of staff with special training and responsibilities for the supervision and direction of these rehabilitation activities for blind persons, the Omaha Goodwill Industries cooperative programs are proving to be of much value in providing rehabilitation services to the blind of Nebraska.

Cooperative agreements for referral of persons who might possibly benefit from the services of this agency continue to work well between the Nebraska Services for the Visually Impaired and such agencies as the Division of Rehabilitation Services in the State Department of Education, the Division of Special Education in the State Department of Education, the Nebraska School for the Visually Handicapped, the State Department of Labor, the State Department of Public Welfare, Selective Service, public and private schools throughout the state, as well as individual professional persons over the state whose work is related to persons with visual impairments. These relationships are resulting in a continuous and ever-increasing flow of referrals to this agency of persons in need of services. Early referral of persons with visual defects is extremely important for best adjustment to blindness as well as for the best possible chance for sight conservation or sight restoration through medical treatment and care. Delay of referral of persons in the early stages of progressive conditions which lead to blindness often results in permanent blindness.

The 1963 Legislature recognized the need for increased funds to meet the need for adequate services and increased the appropriation of state funds from \$150,000 for the 1961-1963 biennium to \$187,202 for the 1963-1965 biennium. The continued increase in number of persons in need of services as well as the continued increases in costs of services makes this appropriation inadequate. As this biennium draws to a close, the 1965 Legislature has increased the state appropriation for the 1965-1967 biennium to \$207,500. This increased appropriation for the 1965-1967 biennium, along with the pending increase in federal matching percentages which greatly increases the amount of federal funds available for vocational rehabilitation services, would appear to adequately meet the need for funds to secure the staff and purchase the required services, including, but not limited to medical and surgical care and hospitalization, prosthetic appliances, vocational training, maintenance during the training, transportation, occupational tools and equipment, and reader service.

Blindness, in itself, need not lead to a life of frustration and dependence. Opportunity provided through extensive and intensive vocational rehabilitation services can make possible full, productive employment in such diverse occupations as mechanics, electronics, teaching, sales, computer programming, public relations, journalism, and law.

The goal of this agency in vocational rehabilitation services to Nebraska's blind and visually impaired citizens who are interested in and eligible for such services is to provide services which are adequate in both quantity and quality.

Vocational rehabilitation services were provided to

the aged as well as the young. While 60% of the persons whose cases were closed as rehabilitated during this biennium were under the age of 45 at time of acceptance for services, 10% were above the age of 65. The length of time and amount of total expenditure of funds also varies greatly from acceptance of the case to final closure with services completed. The time may be anywhere from a few months to ten years or more, and the expenditures may be from thirty dollars to eight or ten thousand dollars or more. The services provided in each case are based upon complete medical examination and consultation, as well as other diagnostic procedures and investigation to permit thorough and complete planning.

Technological changes being brought about by science and industry make it essential that this agency constantly change its approaches to provide services which will help blind persons to develop their potentials for participating and sharing in the abundant life of today's world.

THE STATE SERVICES

While most of the staff and funds of the agency are used for vocational rehabilitation services, the fact is that by far the most of Nebraska's blind population are not eligible for or interested in vocational rehabilitation. They are either too young or too old, already suitably employed, or too severely handicapped by afflictions in addition to blindness.

Special services of many kinds are provided for these persons, too, by this agency and in cooperation with other agencies both public and private.

One of the most important of these services is that of the home teachers who are blind themselves and who teach such things as communication skills, independent travel techniques with the use of a white cane, homemaking skills, craft work and other leisure-time activities. The reading and writing of Braille as well as typing may be a part of the communications skills which are taught by the home teachers. These crafts and skills, as well as the adjustment to blindness, are taught in the homes of the blind when they are unable to leave their homes for the instruction. The home teachers also give instruction in any or all of these areas to vocational rehabilitation clients of the agency when called upon to do so. The home teachers also train volunteers so that they may assist in transcribing Braille for use by blind persons.

Another very popular service of the agency is the lending and repair of talking book machines for the blind. These machines are provided through an agreement with the Library of Congress. An agreement with the Casper E. Yost Chapter of the Telephone Pioneers of America in Omaha to provide repair service as a volunteer service has enabled the agency to provide a machine for every eligible applicant in the state without any waiting on the part of the applicant, and to replace machines in need of repair as soon as the need for replacement is known to the agency. The Telephone Pioneers also deliver and pick up the machines for users in the Omaha area in person, and handle the mailing of the machines for users in other parts of the state. Four hundred forty-six talking book machines were repaired by the Telephone Pioneers during the

biennium without any charge for the service. About 850 talking book machines are in use by blind persons in Nebraska. Close cooperation with the Nebraska Public Library Commission and Library for the Blind provides a complete library service for blind persons in Nebraska.

The agency increased the number of supervised vending stands in public buildings in Lincoln, Omaha, Hastings, Grand Island, and North Platte from nine to eleven during the biennium. One of the new stands is a coffee shop type of stand and the other a package stand with vending machines and prepackaged food items. Two existing stands were moved to different locations with greatly improved facilities and increased profit potentials for the operators. There are presently twelve blind persons working as stand operators or assistants. Annual gross sales in the vending stand program are about \$90,000. In addition, commissions from the operation of vending machines are about \$13,000 annually. Total earnings paid to the operators of the vending stands during the biennium amounted to \$40,459. The expansion and improvement of the vending stand program was made possible by an increase of \$20,000 in the revolving fund for these purposes. The increase was from \$30,000 to \$50,000 and was made by the special session of the 1963 State Legislature.

The increase in the revolving fund for improving small business opportunities for the blind also made it possible for some expansion of home industries and caravan sales of blind-made products. The cooperation of Nebraska Lions Clubs has made it possible for the blind caravan sales operator to sell about \$17,000 annually in blind-made merchandise, earning for himself over \$4,000 annually, and helping to provide a market for merchandise being made by home-bound blind persons.

The Lincoln Braille Club continues to provide rent-free, with all utilities paid, the warehouse and shop space for the home industries and caravan sales program. The shop provides self-employment for one blind person. In addition, three blind persons are self-employed as salesmen and seven blind persons are making products in their homes. Further expansion in all phases of small businesses and home industries is anticipated.

The agency has continued to promote sight conservation through the use of films, lectures, and the distribution of literature on eye care and safety. The agency has also worked closely with the Nebraska Lions Sight Conservation Foundation, The Nebraska Foundation for the Visually Handicapped, the Division of Special Education in the State Department of Education, and the Departments of Health and Public Welfare, as well as many other public and private groups and organizations in promoting sight conservation and prevention of blindness. The result is ever-increasing public awareness of the importance of eye care; medical treatment for prevention, preservation, and restoration of sight; and rehabilitation opportunities for the visually impaired.

Many free or inexpensive aids are made available to persons in need of them through this agency and the many state and nation-wide service agencies and or-

ganizations engaged in providing services to blind persons. The agency serves as the coordinating agency for all types of services and aids for persons of all ages and all types of needs arising from visual defects or conditions.

Well over 1,500 of Nebraska's visually impaired citizens were served directly one or more times during the biennium by Nebraska Services for the Visually Impaired. All of Nebraska's visually impaired citizens are being served by its continuing programs of information on prevention, services, and rehabilitation.

CONCLUSION

This report would not be complete without including commendation to the dedicated staff of professional and clerical employees of the agency in their efforts to continually work toward higher quality of services of all kinds for Nebraska's visually impaired citizens.

During the biennium 238 new cases were accepted for vocational rehabilitation services compared with 187 for the previous biennium. In spite of this increasing demand for services and the increasing costs of services, such as medical and surgical care and hospital fees, prosthetic appliances, tuition for vocational training, maintenance during training, transportation, occupational tools and equipment, and salaries for members of the staff, the agency has been able to provide services for every eligible applicant.

Although the agency continues to qualify for less than 25% of the Federal funds available to it for vocational rehabilitation because of the lack of sufficient State funds in the budget appropriation, the agency has been able to meet the needs for services. Evidence of efficient use of both staff and funds is indicated by the fact that the Nebraska Services for the Visually Impaired had the lowest average cost per rehabilitated case for any of the six states in Region VI which have separate vocational rehabilitation agen-

cies for the blind for both Fiscal Year 1964 and Fiscal Year 1965; and also the highest number of rehabilitants per counselor of any of the same six state agencies. The states in addition to Nebraska in Region VI of the United States Vocational Rehabilitation Administration are Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas, and South Dakota. The seventh state in Region VI, North Dakota, has just one agency serving all types of disabilities in vocational rehabilitation.

The State appropriation for the biennium to this agency was \$187,202. This represented an increase of \$37,202 over the appropriation of \$150,000 for the previous biennium. Approximately \$115,000 of the total appropriation was used for matching for Federal funds on about a 62% Federal/38% State share basis to secure an additional \$192,000 in Federal funds to finance the total program of the agency. Thus, the agency had about \$380,000 total expenditures for its service program.

As this report is written, the 1965 Legislature has increased the State appropriation for the 1965-1967 biennium to \$207,500; and there has been Federal legislation passed which increases the Federal share for vocational rehabilitation to 68%/32% for Fiscal 1966, and to 75%/25% thereafter. It is with much satisfaction that we can report that on the basis of this combined State and Federal action, funds for staff and services should be adequate for now and in the immediate future. This is the first time in the history of the agency that this has been true.

In view of these developments, it is a pleasure to be able to report that Nebraska's many citizens who are blind or severely visually impaired can receive the highest quality services available anywhere in an effort to help them to achieve their maximum level of independence and usefulness. In a society which recognizes the importance of human dignity and well-being, Nebraska must strive to secure this for every person.

SERVICES FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED
Vocational Rehabilitation Case Movement
Biennium ending June 30, 1965

REFERRALS	PERCENT OF CHANGE OVER 1961-63 BIENNIUM	
TOTAL ON BOOKS BEGINNING OF BIENNIUM	108	+50%
NEW REFERRALS DURING BIENNIUM	605	+28%
TOTAL REFERRALS FOR BIENNIUM	713	+31%
ACCEPTED FOR SERVICES DURING BIENNIUM	238	+27%
CLOSED AS NOT FEASIBLE DURING BIENNIUM	349	+41%
REFERRALS REMAINING AT END OF BIENNIUM	126	+16%
ACTIVE CASES		
TOTAL BEING SERVED BEGINNING OF BIENNIUM	134	+50%
ACCEPTED FOR SERVICES DURING BIENNIUM	238	+27%
TOTAL NUMBER SERVED DURING BIENNIUM	372	+35%
CLOSED FROM ACTIVE DURING BIENNIUM		
REHABILITATED	155	+40%
CLOSED OTHERWISE	56	+81%
RECEIVING SERVICES AT END OF BIENNIUM	161	+20%

CASE SERVICE EXPENDITURE FOR CLIENTS	1964		1965	
	NUMBER OF CLIENTS	AMOUNT	NUMBER OF CLIENTS	AMOUNT
DIAGNOSTIC PROCEDURES	171	\$3,960.34	188	\$3,451.15
SURGERY AND TREATMENT	28	6,588.40	37	7,056.55
PROSTHETIC APPLIANCES	57	3,320.62	50	2,384.95
HOSPITALIZATION AND CONVALESCENT CARE	24	7,531.74	27	6,941.24
TRAINING AND TRAINING MATERIALS	94	30,093.81	102	27,813.29
MAINTENANCE AND TRANSPORTATION	36	8,909.79	39	6,363.84
TOOLS, EQUIPMENT AND LICENSES	11	19,302.91	17	10,340.11
READER'S FEES AND OTHER	4	758.15	3	1,138.71
TOTALS	*425	\$80,465.76	*463	\$65,489.84

* THESE TOTALS INCLUDE CLIENTS RECEIVING MORE THAN ONE TYPE OF SERVICE LISTED.

